

Psychological Services Staff

Background

Our inspection of the Psychological Services Staff (PSS) concentrated on assessing the effectiveness of PSS internal management, its services and its relations with the rest of OMS. We did not attempt to evaluate the adequacy or propriety of applicant selection tests which were thoroughly reviewed as part of the Recruitment Survey completed in Summer 1980.

PSS is located on the seventh floor of the Chamber of Commerce Building, except for the [] which is on the sixth floor. 25X1
A request has been made for additional seventh floor space which, if granted, would relocate and allow for better supervision of the [] 25X1
[] make room for the overflowing PSS library, and provide additional 25X1
offices for expected new employees. Having the entire staff on one floor would also improve security.

Organization

At the time of the inspection PSS had [] part-time 25X9
employees. The Staff makes use of one independent contractor on a frequent basis and eight on a more occasional basis. Because of its increasing workload, PSS has been authorized an overstrength of three staff positions and is actively recruiting to fill them.

PSS has a Research Branch and an Assessment and Counseling Branch. The latter is the larger Branch and has under its supervision a seven

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person There is no Deputy Chief position in the Staff, but the branch chiefs serve alternately as acting chief whenever necessary.

Most of the professional employees have advanced degrees with the majority holding doctorate degrees. Clinical and experimental psychology are the predominant areas of specialization. An interesting phenomenon in the current staffing complement is that nearly half the employees have a background or present family association with the Agency, which gives them a better understanding of the Agency's unique needs and functions. This is the result of a calculated effort by the current management team to curb the costly personnel turnovers which were prevalent in the past. The diversity in the psychological work offered to PSS employees now is another positive factor for long-term retention of employees.

At full strength, PSS staffing appears to be adequate to meet its responsibilities.

Functions

The Assessment and Counseling Branch of PSS provides testing, assessment, counseling and training services. Customers for these services come from virtually every office in the Agency.

Testing and Assessment of Applicants and Employees

The primary responsibility of the Assessment and Counseling Branch is the testing and assessment of applicants for Agency employment. This testing and assessment are not standard parts of the applicant medical selection process carried out by the Selection Processing Division and the Selection Support Branch (SSB) of PD, but are done in response to specific

requests of Agency components. PSS work in this area is aimed at determining abilities, aptitudes, interests, work attitudes and general suitability of certain applicants for Agency employment. To accomplish this a variety of tests are administered, scored and interpreted; interviews are conducted by psychologists; and a detailed evaluation is written. This process is known as an intensive assessment. Intensive assessments are done on candidates for the Career Trainee (CT) program, applicants for positions with the Operations Directorate's International Activities Division [REDACTED] and prospective PCS assignees [REDACTED] 25X1

[REDACTED] In the latter two categories spouses are also 25X1 assessed. This is the most labor intensive work done by the branch and the workload has more than doubled in the last two years.

Customers think highly of the support they receive from PSS on intensive assessments although there are occasional complaints about delay in getting the written reports. This delay is a direct result of the increased workload.

The Assessment and Counseling Branch also administers a number of special tests (the Brandon-Wolfe Computer Programming Aptitude Test, the Photointepretation Test, the General Aptitude Test Battery for graphic arts aptitudes), the Differential Aptitude Test, and the Professional Test Battery to employees at the request of an individual or a component. The results are used in vocational counseling, in placement of employees, in determining appropriate changes in career fields and as part of the process to convert from clerical to professional status. Demand for these tests also continues to increase, which reflects customer satisfaction with branch services, but adds to the heavy workload.

Counseling Services

The Assessment and Counseling Branch offers vocational and pre-retirement counseling to Agency employees. Although several of the psychologists have had clinical counseling experience, provision of personal counseling is not part of the PSS charter. When the need for such counseling is recognized or requested, referrals are provided on a case-by-case basis. This situation arises infrequently.

The pre-retirement counseling is handled almost exclusively by an independent contractor who is a retired PSS employee. It has purposely been kept an informal program with little publicity because of the limited PSS resources available to it. The availability of the service is announced at the annual retirement seminar and satisfied customers spread the word. The service involves testing, interpretation of the test results and counseling and would probably cost about \$750 if sought on the outside.

Participation in Training Courses

Branch personnel participate in the Program on Creative Management (POCM) and the counseling course sponsored by the OTE and serve as guest lecturers in other courses and seminars as well. The POCM is given six times each year with 18 students per session, which represents a 50 percent increase in both frequency and number of students since the program began a few years ago. It is one of the most sought after Agency management courses. Each running requires the services of a number of PSS branch employees and consultants from part-time to almost a full work week. Testing, observation and intensive individual feedback are part of the PSS contribution. The counseling course is held nine times annually and

requires the full-time services of a psychologist for one week. OTE is very high in its praise of PSS support to its training programs.

Research Branch

Research Branch devotes about 60 percent of its resources to supporting PSS programs by performing reliability and validation studies of the tests used by the Assessment and Counseling Branch, by doing performance predictability studies for specific groups of people and by developing computer data bases for storage, processing and manipulation of test results. Performance predictability studies are also done at the request of various Agency components. The branch also does work for components in all four directorates and for some Community elements. The bulk of this work is related to human factors research (the psychology of man/machine interface), assistance in the development of specialized computer data bases and employee attitude surveys. The Research Branch is charged by the DDA to review and assist in the development of employee attitudinal surveys throughout the Agency.

Some of the human factors research has been conducted in support of photographic interpretation, which the National Photographic Interpretation Center has found very useful. For some time PSS has supported Project SAFE through experiment design and human factors research and recently received a special letter of appreciation for "sustained high quality support" from the Director of Central Reference. Good support has also been provided to the Language School in the design and analysis of computer aids for foreign language training and testing.

Most of the work done by the Research Branch is not time-sensitive so that the increasing workload has not adversely affected the quality of the

services provided. The maintenance of quality work has led to more requests for research because of word-of-mouth advertising by satisfied customers. The branch does not formally advertise its services.

Key Issues

Internal Communication

Overall, PSS is a well managed organization. The Staff chief and his two branch chiefs work closely together as a management team. All three are respected by their subordinates and are seen as accessible to and supportive of their personnel. Communications within the Staff could be improved on both administrative and professional matters. Formal staff meetings are held infrequently and often include only the professional employees. There is a lack of communication between the two branches and to some extent within each branch. Individuals seem to work fairly independently and in isolation. In some cases, compartmentation of projects has been necessary because of clearance levels. There are no barriers to seeking peer counsel on professional problems, but there is no regularized system for doing so.

OMS Utilization of PSS

Although organizationally a part of OMS, PSS operates relatively autonomously. This independent stature is fostered by physical separation since all PSS personnel are located in the Chamber of Commerce Building. The C/PSS reports directly to D/MS and DD/MS and regularly attends the D/MS staff meetings, but there has been relatively little other personal or professional contact between PSS and OMS Headquarters elements. There is some interface between the Assessment and Counseling Branch and the

Selection Support Branch of the Psychiatric Division at Ames because of their roles in the screening of applicants. For example, PSS works through SSB to bring cases before the Applicant Review Panel.

However, generally speaking there is relatively little knowledge of PSS activities among the medical doctors in OMS and most PSS personnel are unaware of OMS programs beyond those known to all Agency employees. This isolation and lack of communication is denying benefits to both sides. We believe that OMS management is missing a great deal by not bringing PSS closer to the rest of the organization. PSS has much more to contribute to OMS programs. (PSS has not taken much initiative in this area either, partly because of its workload.) For example, PSS has expertise in data processing techniques and applications further advanced than that in the rest of OMS. Yet, PSS is rarely consulted in the planning stages of programs and sometimes only after a project is well launched or nearly complete. The stress study program of the Psychiatric Division and the ADP programs of the Field Operations Division are two prime examples.

The expertise of the clinical psychologists in PSS who have military, institutional and private counseling experience is not used by other parts of OMS. These psychologists have something to offer to the counterterrorism training program, the alcohol program and the stress study program. Some of them have given lectures on stress management to Agency-run courses; yet they have not been asked to apply this knowledge to developing stress management instruction for personnel going overseas or in any way to support OMS' role in preparing employees and their families for overseas service.

PSS would also profit from a closer working relationship with other elements in OMS. For example, by getting feedback on problem cases or psychiatric medevacs, PSS would be better able to evaluate and improve its own assessment process.

Relationship of Agency Psychological Elements

PSS psychologists are involved in a variety of assessment, testing, counseling, training and research activities which, in part, touch on or are similar to activities of psychologists in other parts of the Agency. Yet, PSS has no formal or informal relationship and only rare, if any, contact with psychologists in other components. The one exception to this is the work which PSS psychologists do with OTE's Management School psychologists. The majority of psychologists in PSS believe they could profit professionally from interaction with psychologists in other parts of the Agency and favor having such contact.

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The recommended survey should also address the often-studied issue of placement of the various psychological elements in the Agency: whether it is more efficient and effective to have separate units in support of different offices or whether it is better to have one central staff providing the full range of psychological services, and in both cases where those elements should be. For example, PSS has been a part of OMS since 1962 when it transferred from the Office of Training. Over the years there was discussion about whether PSS belonged in OMS or whether its mission was more closely related to that of the Office of Personnel Policy, Planning, and Management or the Office of Training and Education. Today there remain some PSS employees who feel that their work has little to do with OMS and more appropriately aligns with the mission of OPPPM or that of OTE. Others see advantages of objectivity and medical confidentiality accruing to PSS because it is part of OMS.

Pending an updated review, we encourage PSS management to contact other psychologists in the Agency to share knowledge of their work and to explore ways in which exchange can be of mutual benefit.

Graduate Study Sponsorship

PSS management sought and received approval to sponsor full-time graduate schooling for one of its psychologists for the 1980-81 academic year. The year's schooling will enable the psychologist to complete all course work for a PhD; the dissertation will still have to be done before the degree is obtained. The degree will make the individual eligible for a higher level position in PSS. Sponsorship of this education costs OMS \$6,200, about 15 percent of its FY-1980 and 1981 training budgets. In

fact, this expenditure so depleted the OMS training budget that funds will not be available for other members of PSS to attend professional seminars and conferences throughout the year. Limitations in OMS travel funds also limit the latter opportunities.

PSS management sees its action as an investment in the future; we support reasonable professional growth with taxpayer's funds but would only observe the need for a balanced office program. PSS is allowing one individual four full days of administrative leave each week at a time when its workload is increasing and it complains of being shorthanded.

Recommendations*

As a result of our inspection of PSS, we second the recommendation made in the recent survey report on the Office of Technical Service and approved by the then DDCI that:

- "The DDCI survey Agency psychological testing and assessment activities to ensure that maximum individual opportunities and organizational needs and benefits are being realized."

We also recommend that:

- The D/MS take appropriate steps to ensure a closer working relationship between PSS and the rest of his organization, so as to take full advantage of all available expertise to fulfill the OMS mission.

*Recommendation B2 in the Executive Summary applies to this section.